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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2008

In Today's Papers

AKP Submits Its Defense to the Constitutional Court  
All news outlets report the AKP submitted its defense to the Constitutional Court in connection with the closure case against Turkey's ruling party on Monday. "The closure case was based on Google search results, not on law," comments the leftist Taraf while citing arguments from the AKP defense that the prosecutor used Google to gather evidence against the party on the Internet. The AKP defense says the case was "politically motivated," stressing the efforts of the prosecutor to link the party to violence were "ridiculous." In addition, the defense contends, "This case is a result of the chief prosecutor's democratic secularism allergy, scientism and reservations about Turkey's EU entry." The defense also blames the prosecutor for "dictating a militant understanding of secularism as a way of life." It notes, "The six-year performance of our party proves it is the guarantor of the democratic, secular and social rule of law." The defense points to the "psychological manipulation" efforts over the Constitutional Court through comments made by Prime Minister Erdogan years before the foundation of the AKP. The AKP is not a continuation of any political party, and it does not have any hidden agenda, the defense emphasized. It also underlined President Abdullah Gul was elected president and had cut ties with the ruling party before the closure case was filed. Papers report Gul believes efforts to link him to the closure case are "unconstitutional."

Government spokesman Cemil Cicek told the press yesterday the case should be finalized without delay because "uncertainty harms Turkey." Mainstreams Hurriyet and Milliyet as well as liberal Radikal and Islamist-oriented Zaman carry the same headline, "The AKP Responds: This is a Google Case." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports "The AKP Attacks Prosecutor in its Defense."

In his indictment, the chief prosecutor has also demanded 71 AKP members, including President Abdullah Gul who was formerly foreign minister, former Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc, and Prime Minister Erdogan, to be banned from politics for five years.

Israel-Syria Meet in Second Round of Indirect Talks

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Syria and Israel completed the second round of their indirect peace talks, and are now preparing for the third round of talks. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) said in a press release Monday the parties reiterated their determination to continue talks on a regular basis.

MFA noted the next round of the Israeli-Syrian talks was also scheduled, but did not mention a specific date. Papers cite Ha'aretz quoting an unidentified Israeli official as saying the sides agreed to two more rounds with Turkish intermediation, but no dates have been set. Other Israeli officials said French President Nicolas Sarkozy is attempting to set up a three-way meeting with Olmert and Assad. "The Israelis are working with French President Sarkozy to coordinate a meeting between Sarkozy, Olmert, and Esad during the Mediterranean Summit in Paris July 13th," writes liberal Radikal and the Islamist-oriented Zaman.

Gendarme Request Authorization for Filing Personal Information  
Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Gendarme General Command requested changes in some articles of the draft law on Protection of Personal Data. The draft says, "Personal information including race, political views, religion and private life cannot be revealed." During the works of the subcommittee that operates under the parliamentary Justice Committee on the draft law, Gendarme General Command sent a letter asking to store personal data records of suspects to investigate and prevent crime. In its letter, the gendarme objected to the selection of the seven-member Personal Data Protection Council by the Council of Ministers which, according to gendarme, might damage the autonomy of the council as well cause nepotism and favoritism.

ANKARA 00001121 002 OF 004

#### "Iran Like A Bird"

Columnist Enis Berberoglu wrote today in mainstream Hurriyet referring to a conversation between Ambassador Wilson and Energy Minister Guler. "It was a friendly talk until they began to discuss Iran. The Ambassador suggested the Minister give up on Iranian natural gas imports. When Guler asked how Turkey would compensate, the Ambassador referred to Iraqi gas. When the Minister argued that Iraq did not have it, the Ambassador claimed that Iraq could develop it. Guler reminded the Ambassador of his earlier reference to one bird in hand being better than two birds on a branch. Ambassador Wilson responded, 'But the bird might burn along with the branch soon.' Some people in Ankara misinterpreted this comment as an early signal of a US operation against Iran. US Embassy officials confirmed the Ambassador only wanted to point out the risks of making business with a country that was under UN sanctions. Ankara reacted to the Ambassador's comments since an operation on Iran could further weaken the hand of the AKP as they fight against their party's closure. A possible US operation against Iran would lead to rapprochement between the Turkish and American militaries, and weaken the AKP's credibility as well. Also, the AKP government might be politically stuck between the US and Muslim Iran. That's how the US Ambassador's words were exaggerated from ears to ears."

#### Turkey's Institutions Disagree on Kyoto Protocol

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Turkey's Environment Ministry, the Foreign Ministry (MFA,) the General Secretariat for EU Affairs all support signing the Kyoto Protocol. The Transport Ministry says it is not prepared to meet the Kyoto Protocol requirements. The Industry Ministry says Turkey's energy consumption was below the world average, adding Turkey should fix carefully its positions in the Kyoto process. Mainstream Milliyet reports the State Planning Organization (DPT) as well as ministries and business representatives warn the implementation of the protocol in Turkey would be costlier than in Europe. Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) says Turkey should complete all preparations for meeting Kyoto Protocol requirements before signing it, and warns that hasty steps could harm the Turkish economy. The Turkish Employers' Union (TISK) says being a party to the protocol would harm Turkey's competition potential. In a statement released Monday, Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) welcomed the Turkish government's decision to join the Kyoto Protocol, saying Turkey would have a voice in shaping the new global order in the post-2012 era.

Bugun: PKK Makes Money from Philip Morris' Tobacco Smuggling into Iraq

Conservative-nationalist Bugun reports a conference to be held by the U.S. Ankara Embassy had to be cancelled when Turkish police, gendarme and organized crime department of police declined to send representatives to the gathering after Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) warned them on the "ties" between the PKK and American tobacco producers. The MFA letter written by Security Affairs Director-General Ambassador Hayati Guven recalled the EU Commission had initiated a lawsuit against some U.S. tobacco producers for money laundering via tobacco smuggling into Iraq. The PKK also makes profits from such activities of the U.S. companies. The U.S. counsel firm serving the Turkish Embassy in Washington is evaluating Turkey's chances for launching a court case against American tobacco companies within the frame of their alleged ties with the PKK, says the letter. Bugun says the Philip Morris International (PMI) was cited among the participants in the conference invitation sent out in February by the U.S. Ankara Embassy, and that the EU Commission had also filed a court case against PMI.

Poll: Turks Trust Erdogan

Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the U.S.-based WorldPublicOpinion.Org poll of 19,751 people in nations composing 60 percent of the world's population, including Egypt, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Iran, Jordan, and Turkey. The poll found

ANKARA 00001121 003 OF 004

55% of Turks trust Prime Minister Erdogan. After Erdogan, Turks trust Iranian President Ahmadinejad by 16 percent and the Pakistani President Musharraf by 15 percent. French President Sarkozy is trusted the least, by 4 percent. 6% of Turks trust Iraqi PM al-Maliki and 7 percent trust U.S. President Bush. Among regional leaders, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki had the lowest marks in all the Arab countries polled. Majorities in all three of Arab countries polled, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, and 62 percent of the Turks say they had "no" or "not much" confidence in Ahmadinejad.

The poll was conducted from January 10-May 6.

Editorial Commentary on SOFA; Irish Referendum

"The Security Agreement between Iraq and America"

Fikret Bila wrote in Islamist leaning Zaman (6/17): "The United States is working very hard to ensure its status and presence in Iraq before the UN Resolution expires in December of this year. There are important meetings going on and tough bargains are being made behind closed doors for a comprehensive security agreement between Iraq and the U.S. Even though the Bush administration hoped to finalize this before the end of July, it seems unlikely. According to statements from Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki as well as from other officials, the two sides have not yet reached consensus on any of the details, while Americans are voicing optimism. David Satterfield, the State Department's top advisor on Iraq, has recently expressed similar optimism for concluding an agreement with Iraq despite ongoing opposition from Iraqi politicians. At this point, it is hard to understand the agreement since no further details are available. We still do not know if the United States is seeking 58 permanent bases in Iraq, as Iraqi politicians claimed. There is also speculation the Americans will transfer custody of detained Iraqi nationals to Iraqi local authorities. It will be very interesting to follow the outcome of this process and see the nature of the agreement. This is so very important for everyone, including Iran and Turkey."

"Can the EU Still Be A Union?"

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet (6/16): "The Irish referendum indicated the value of even a small member country's influence upon the Union's future. The rate of Irish no votes is only 0.02 percent compared to the total population of EU member countries. However due to the unanimity rule, Ireland's votes to reject the Lisbon Treaty are enough to prevent the treaty's implementation in 2009. It appears structural reforms within the EU are often regarded negatively by the public. For example, France and the Netherlands rejected the EU Constitution in 2005; the Lisbon

Treaty was, in fact, a diluted version of the 2005 constitution. European voters either have no information about the changes or they are against the changes because they believe in sovereignty. Unlike their leaders and governments, the people of EU nations are not keen on political and security unification. Ireland's referendum shows the EU's 'European identity' has not yet reached the level of the man on the street."

TV News:  
CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- Tuzla shipyard workers went on strike yesterday to draw attention to work safety problems.
- 21 Turkish universities will elect their new rectors on June 18-19.
- The overall unemployment figure in Turkey rose to 10.7 percent, marking 2.5 million unemployed people.

ANKARA 00001121 004 OF 004

#### International News

- EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said Ireland's rejection of the European Union's reform treaty does not diminish the bloc's commitment to admitting Turkey into the bloc.
- The EU adopts amendments to the Green Line Regulation concerning goods, services and persons crossing the line between north and south Cyprus.
- Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said his country still needs American troops to secure progress achieved as a result of a successful US surge strategy.

WILSON